

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for monitoring health signs of an individual, the method comprising the steps of:

detecting at least one health sign characteristic of the individual with a sensor unit that is located proximate to the individual;

producing a health signal from the sensor unit that indicates at least one health sign of the individual;

communicating the health signal from the individual to a receiving unit over a wireless connection;

processing the health signal to determine if an emergency condition exists; and

providing an indication of an emergency condition to a destination node of a network, wherein operating electrical power is applied to the receiving unit in an initialization mode, said receiving unit determining if said receiving unit has received an identification signal from the sensor unit, and receiving a health signal only from a sensor unit having the received identification signal.

2. A method as defined in claim 1, further comprising:

halting the application of operating electrical power; and

repeating the steps of determining and receiving upon resuming the application of operating electrical power, until a next identification signal is received.

3. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises responding to an emergency condition by activating a sensor unit.

4. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises responding to an emergency condition by activating a response device.

5. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein activating a response device comprises controlling a household appliance.

6. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises receiving the signal at a multimedia server connected to the network, wherein the multimedia server determines if an emergency condition exists and, if an emergency condition does exist, transmits an emergency signal.

7. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal with information from an ambient environmental sensor.

8. A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for ambient temperature.

9. A method as defined in claim 7, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for an expected time of day fluctuation in the health signal.

10. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein:
the sensor unit comprises a temperature sensor that is attached to the individual and produces a temperature signal;
the temperature signal provides an indication of whether the individual is in a safe or emergency temperature condition; and
the step of producing a health signal comprises producing a temperature signal that indicates a temperature characteristic of the individual.

11. A method as defined in claim 1, wherein:
the sensor unit comprises a position detector that is attached to the individual and produces a health signal;
the health signal provides an indication of whether the individual is in an upright or a horizontal position; and
the step of producing a health signal comprises producing a digital position signal that indicates a position characteristic of the individual.

12. A method for monitoring health signs of an individual, the method comprising the steps of:

communicating a health signal from a sensor unit on the individual to a receiving unit; and

processing the health signal to determine if an emergency condition exists, wherein the sensor unit receives electrical power from a battery, battery power is determined by counting the number of health signal transmissions that have occurred since electrical power was last applied, and an indication of low battery power is provided when a predetermined number of transmissions have occurred.

13. A method as defined in claim 12, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises receiving the signal at a multimedia server connected to a network, wherein the multimedia server determines if an emergency condition exists and, if an emergency condition does exist, transmits an emergency signal.

14. A method as defined in claim 12, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal with information from an ambient environmental sensor.

15. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for ambient temperature.

16. A method as defined in claim 14, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for an expected time of day fluctuation in the health signal.

17. A method as defined in claim 12, wherein operating electrical power is applied to the receiving unit in an initialization mode, said receiving unit determining if said receiving unit has received an identification signal from the sensor unit, and receiving a health signal only from a sensor unit having the received identification signal.

18. A method as defined in claim 17, further comprising:
halting the application of operating electrical power; and
repeating the steps of determining and receiving upon resuming the application of operating electrical power until a next identification signal is received.

19. A method as defined in claim 12, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises responding to an emergency condition by activating a sensor unit.

20. A method as defined in claim 12, wherein the step of processing the health signal comprises responding to an emergency condition by activating a response device.

21. A method as defined in claim 20, wherein activating a response device comprises controlling a household appliance.

22. A method for continuously monitoring health signs of a patient over a period of time, the method comprising the steps of:

attaching a sensor unit to the patient;
producing a patient signal that indicates the current status of a patient health sign;

transmitting the patient signal to a receiving unit; and
displaying the patient's current health sign status at the receiving unit, wherein the sensor unit receives electrical power from a battery, battery power is determined by counting the number of signal transmissions that have occurred since electrical power was last applied, and an indication of low battery power is provided when a predetermined number of transmissions have occurred.

23. A method as defined in claim 22, further comprising the step of processing the patient signal to determine if the patient's current health sign status indicates an emergency condition and sending the patient signal over a network to a destination device.

24. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the step of processing the patient signal comprises receiving the patient signal at a multimedia server connected to the network, wherein the multimedia server determines if an emergency condition exists and, if an emergency condition does exist, transmits an emergency signal over the network.

25. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the receiving apparatus processes the patient signal with information from an ambient environmental sensor before providing the patient signal to the network.

26. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the step of processing the patient signal comprises responding to the existence of an emergency condition by activating a sensor unit.

27. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the step of processing the patient signal comprises responding to the existence of an emergency condition by controlling a household appliance.

28. A method as defined in claim 24, wherein the receiving unit processes the patient signal by compensating for ambient temperature.

29. A method as defined in claim 24, wherein the receiving unit processes the patient signal by compensating for an expected time of day fluctuation in the patient signal.

30. A system for monitoring health signs of an individual, said system comprising:
a sensor unit for producing a health signal that indicates at least one health sign of an individual, said sensor unit being located proximate to an individual; and
a receiving unit for receiving the health signal from said sensor unit over a wireless connection, said receiving unit including:

identification determination means for determining if said receiving unit has received an identification signal from said sensor unit;

means for allowing said receiving unit to receive the health signal from said sensor unit only after said receiving unit has received the identification signal from said sensor unit; and

emergency condition determination means for determining if an emergency condition exists based on the health signal received from said sensor unit.

31. A system as defined in claim 30, further comprising a server means for communicating an indication of an emergency condition from said receiving unit to a network when said emergency condition determination means determines that an emergency condition exists.

32. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein:

the sensor unit comprises a temperature sensor that is attached to the individual and produces a temperature signal;

the temperature signal provides an indication of whether the individual is in a safe or emergency temperature condition; and

the sensor unit produces a temperature signal that indicates a temperature characteristic of the individual.

33. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal with information from an ambient environmental sensor before providing the health signal to the network.

34. A system as defined in claim 33, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for ambient temperature.

35. A system as defined in claim 33, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for an expected time of day fluctuation in the health signal.

36. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein:

the sensor unit comprises a position detector that is attached to the individual and produces a health signal;

the health signal provides an indication of whether the individual is in an upright or a horizontal position; and

the sensor unit produces a position signal that indicates a position characteristic of the individual.

37. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the receiving unit operates in the initialization mode at each application of electrical power, such that it registers a sensor unit identification code after each initialization.

38. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by activating a sensor unit.

39. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the system determines an emergency condition by considering multiple health signs signals.

40. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the sensor unit is attached to a harness worn by the individual.

41. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the sensor unit is attached to a garment worn by the individual.

42. A system as defined in claim 41, wherein the system indicates an emergency condition if the sensor unit is removed from the garment.

43. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the receiving unit includes a display that provides a predetermined message in response to an emergency condition.

44. A system as defined in claim 43, wherein the predetermined message comprises an advertisement for a product that may be used to treat the emergency condition.

45. A system as defined in claim 30, wherein the receiving unit processes the provided signal by controlling a household device.

46. A system for monitoring health signs of an individual, said system comprising:
a sensor unit for producing a health signal that indicates at least one health sign of an individual, said sensor unit being located proximate to an individual; and

a receiving unit for receiving the health signal from said sensor unit over a wireless connection, said receiving unit including:

emergency condition determination means for determining if an emergency condition exists based on the health signal received from said sensor unit;

means for receiving electrical power from a battery;

means for determining battery power by counting the number of health signal transmissions that have been received by said receiving unit from said sensor unit since electrical power was last supplied to said receiving unit; and

means for providing an indication of low battery power when a predetermined number of health signal transmissions have occurred since electrical power was last supplied to said receiving unit.

47. A system as defined in claim 46, further comprising a server means for communicating an indication of an emergency condition from said receiving unit to a network when said emergency condition determination means determines that an emergency condition exists.

48. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the receiving unit operates such that, upon the application of electrical power in an initialization mode, the receiving unit determines if the receiving unit has received an identification signal from the sensor unit, and receives a health signal only from a sensor unit having the received identification signal.

49. A system as defined in claim 48, wherein the receiving unit operates in the initialization mode at each application of electrical power, such that it registers a sensor unit identification code after each initialization.

50. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the receiving unit processes the provided signal by activating a sensor.

51. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the system determines an emergency

condition by considering multiple health signs signals.

52. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the sensor unit is attached to a harness worn by the individual.

53. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the sensor unit is attached to a garment worn by the individual.

54. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the receiving apparatus includes a display that provides a predetermined message in response to an emergency condition.

55. A system as defined in claim 46, wherein the receiving unit processes the provided signal by controlling a household device.

56. A system for monitoring health signs of an individual, said system comprising:
a receiving unit for receiving a health signal from a sensor unit over a wireless connection, said receiving unit including:

identification determination means for determining if said receiving unit has received an identification signal from said sensor unit;

means for allowing said receiving unit to receive the health signal from said sensor unit only after said receiving unit has received the identification signal from said sensor unit; and

emergency condition determination means for determining if an emergency condition exists based on the health signal received from said sensor unit.

57. A system as defined in claim 56, further comprising a server means for communicating an indication of an emergency condition from said receiving unit to a network when said emergency condition determination means determines that an emergency condition exists.

58. A system as defined in claim 56, wherein the health signal received by the

receiving unit comprises a digital temperature signal that indicates a temperature characteristic of the individual in response to a temperature signal of the sensor unit.

59. A system as defined in claim 56, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal with information from an ambient environmental sensor before providing the communicated health signal to the network.

60. A system as defined in claim 58, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for an expected time of day fluctuation in the health signal.

61. A system as defined in claim 56, wherein the receiving unit processes the health signal by compensating for ambient temperature.

62. A system as defined in claim 56, wherein the health signal received by the receiving unit comprises a position signal that indicates a position characteristic of the individual.

63. A system as defined in claim 56, wherein the receiving unit operates in the initialization mode at each application of electrical power, such that it registers a sensor unit identification code after each initialization.

64. A system for monitoring health signs of an individual, said system comprising:
a receiving unit for receiving a health signal from a sensor unit over a wireless connection, said receiving unit including:

emergency condition determination means for determining if an emergency condition exists based on the health signal received from said sensor unit;

means for receiving electrical power from a battery;

means for determining battery power by counting the number of health signal transmissions that have been received by said receiving unit from said sensor unit since electrical power was last supplied to said receiving unit; and

means for providing an indication of low battery power when a predetermined number of health signal transmissions have occurred since electrical power was last supplied to said receiving unit.

65. A system as defined in claim 64, further comprising a server means for communicating an indication of an emergency condition from said receiving unit to a network when said emergency condition determination means determines that an emergency condition exists.

66. A system as defined in claim 64, wherein the receiving unit operates such that, upon the application of electrical power in an initialization mode, the receiving unit determines if the receiving unit has received an identification signal from the sensor unit, and receives a health signal only from a sensor unit having the received identification signal.

67. A system as defined in claim 66, wherein the receiving unit operates in the initialization mode at each application of electrical power, such that it registers a sensor unit identification code after each initialization.

68. A system for monitoring health signs of an individual, said system comprising:
a first sensor unit for producing a health signal that indicates at least one health sign of an individual, said sensor unit being located proximate to an individual; and
a receiving unit for receiving the health signal from said sensor unit over a wireless connection, said receiving unit including:

means for determining the format of said health signal from said first sensor unit; and

emergency condition determination means for determining if an emergency condition exists based on the health signal received from said sensor unit.

69. A system as defined in claim 68, further comprising a server means for communicating an indication of an emergency condition from said receiving unit to a

network when said emergency condition determination means determines that an emergency condition exists.

70. A system as defined in claim 68, wherein if said receiving unit determines that said first sensor unit is transmitting a health signal in a format that can be processed by said receiving unit, said receiving unit processes said health signal.

71. A system as defined in claim 68, wherein if said receiving unit determines that said first sensor unit is transmitting a health signal in a format that can not be processed by said receiving unit, said receiving unit sends a request to a network computer for the receiving unit software to be updated to allow said health signal to be processed.

72. A system as defined in claim 68, wherein said first sensor unit includes a first transceiver that transmits the health signal from the first sensor unit to the receiving unit.

73. A system as defined in claim 68, wherein said receiving unit comprises a display.

74. A system as defined in claim 73, wherein said health signal is processed by said receiving unit and processing said health signal includes displaying data representative of said health signal on said display.

75. A system as defined in claim 68, wherein said first sensor unit is replaced with a second sensor unit that has a health signal format different from a health signal format of said first sensor unit.

76. A system as defined in claim 75, wherein if said receiving unit determines that said second sensor unit is transmitting a signal in a format that can be processed by said receiving unit, said receiving unit processes said health signal.

77. A system as defined in claim 76, wherein if said receiving unit determines that

said second sensor unit is transmitting a signal in a format that can not be processed by said receiving unit, said receiving unit sends a request to a network computer for the receiving unit software to be updated to allow said health signal to be processed.

78. A system as defined in claim 77, wherein said second sensor unit includes a second transceiver that transmits the health signal from the second sensor unit to the receiving unit.

79. A method for monitoring health signs of an individual, the method comprising:
detecting at least one health sign characteristic of the individual with a sensor unit that is located proximate to the individual;
producing a health signal from the sensor unit that indicates at least one health sign of the individual;
communicating the health signal from the individual to a receiving unit over a wireless connection;
extracting at least one health factor from an independent data source; and
processing the health signal and the extracted health factor to determine if an emergency condition exists.

80. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said health factor comprises a pollen count.

81. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said health factor comprises an outdoor air temperature.

82. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said independent data source comprises the Internet.

83. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said independent data source comprises a stored database.

84. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said independent data source

comprises a pill dispenser.

85. A method as defined in claim 79, wherein said independent data source comprises an invoice.